

**Testimony of Pete Brentano, Brentano's Tree Farm, St. Paul, Oregon**  
**House Committee on Agriculture**  
**Farm Bill Field Hearing**  
**Yakima, Washington**  
**June 10, 2006**

Chairman Goodlatte, Ranking Minority Member Peterson, Members of the Committee, and Members of Congress, my name is Pete Brentano of Brentano's Tree Farm. I'm co-owner of our family farm, located in Oregon's Willamette Valley, where we grow shade and ornamental trees and a variety of other specialty crops.

I have the pleasure to serve as president of the 1,500-member Oregon Association of Nurseries, which represents Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry, the state's largest sector of agriculture, with annual sales in excess of \$840 million.

Today I want to focus most of my talk on plant pest and disease issues. Plant pests and diseases threaten West Coast nursery growers with serious economic harm due to crop loss, closed markets or burdensome regulatory restrictions. In this respect, we differ little from growers of Florida citrus or soybean farmers.

Recent examples, include the spread of Emerald Ash Borer in parts of the upper Midwest and Canada which caused a dramatic fall off in demand for Ash trees, and millions in dollar losses among Oregon nursery growers. There is a high risk of introducing exotic wood boring insects, like Asian Longhorned Beetle, into this country on untreated solid wood packing material associated with imported industrial goods. And, the plant disease

*Phytophthora ramorum*, popularly known in the press as ‘Sudden Oak Death,’ but let’s call it *P. ramorum*, threatens to result in very restrictive and expensive regulations for West coast nursery growers.

As a result of these threats and recent experience, we believe a new, more effective approach to nursery regulation and inspection is needed; one that relies on nurseries to develop and implement a system to prevent the introduction of pests and diseases onto the nursery. Such systems of production would emphasize regular monitoring for pests and diseases, require recordkeeping, and consist of tools and strategies that enable growers to quickly respond when problems are found. These systems of nursery production would be married to programs of federal and state regulation, inspection and certification.

As you know, the preferred model of assuring the safe production of food is based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP). We think some of the basic features of HACCP could apply to the nursery industry.

We believe the next farm bill must provide for a multi-pronged effort, as follows:

- Authorize and direct research on systems of nursery production and measure their efficacy in preventing the introduction and spread of plant pest and disease problems.
- Develop and pilot systems of production for various types of nurseries in different geographic regions.

- Establish definite timetables for the dissemination and adoption of new systems of production.
- Establish definite timetables for the implementation of regulatory programs based on these new systems of production.

We at the OAN believe tremendous opportunity exists to improve and enhance nursery regulation and inspection. And, the Farm Bill should establish clear overarching goals to guide development of new regulatory policy based on a comprehensive program of research, demonstration and extension. I've included with my testimony a brief discussion paper describing our position.

Quickly, I want to call your attention to several other issues that merit attention:

- Water quantity and availability: based on a federal-state partnership, study the availability of water for Western agriculture and develop an inventory of potential new water storage sites. The Klamath Basin, in Congressman Walden's District, is a prominent example of the disruption caused by inadequate water supply.
- Soil conservation and habitat restoration: support research and incentives to assist nurseries with soil erosion, water conservation and efficiency.
- Create a Specialty Crop Title in the Farm Bill: we want to see emphasis and organization of farm policy for the benefit of specialty crop agriculture (we don't want subsidies but we have focused issues and concerns).

- And even though it is not part of the Farm Bill, agriculture needs a comprehensive immigration reform bill that embraces a guest worker program.

Frankly, without labor, we cannot survive.

Thank you for listening to my oral testimony. I've provided you copies of more extensive written testimony on behalf of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.